Interview with George Feldman

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

AMBASSADOR GEORGE FELDMAN

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy

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Q: Mr. Ambassador, I wonder if you could give me a brief summary of your background, what brought you to Washington and what type of work you were doing.

FELDMAN: To begin with, when I went to law school at Boston University, I was with the Boston Herald at the time.

Q: The newspaper.

FELDMAN: The newspaper. First as a glorified errand boy, and then finally got on the beat, and worked on politics, and that is how I met Senator Walsh, because he was wanting to fill the unexpired term of the elder Senator Lodge, who had died.

Q: So we're talking about Senator David I. Walsh of Massachusetts.

FELDMAN: Yes. He had been governor of the state early on, and then in 1918 he was elected to the United States Senate, and his term expired in 1924. Congressman Gillette, who was then Speaker of the House, ran against him. Coolidge was President. The Coolidge landslide took place in the state of Massachusetts.

Q: Walsh being a Democrat.

FELDMAN: But Walsh, being a Democrat, lost to Gillette by 1,300 votes. Then the younger Senator Lodge died, and they appointed Senator Butler for the unexpired term. Then in '27, when the next regular election came up, the senator ran to fill the unexpired term, and then he was coming up for election again in 1928 because of the six years. Well, in any event, I got active in the campaign. I wasn't really active; I was with the paper at the time, picking up things. But every now and then they asked me to write.

I had to write a brochure for the minority groups. Senator Walsh had a first secretary, we used to call them first secretaries at the time, what they call administrative assistants. His name was Graham McGee. He came up with something, and they weren't pleased with it. The senator's brother and campaign manager showed it to me, and I didn't say anything, but I said, “Give me a typewriter and paper,” and I knocked off something, and they liked it. I insisted on polishing it and getting it in good shape, and they used it. The difference between what Graham McGee had done, the former secretary, and myself, is that I put what we called in Yiddish “schmaltz.” [Laughter] It was for the groups, though—the Jews, Italians, and Poles and whatnot, the kind of thing that appealed to their emotions.

So then, to make a long story short, when Walsh was elected, they had this big celebration, then had another smaller one, and they had Curley, General Cole, and General Logan and all the big-shots there in the Democratic Party at the time. It was, as I say, a small dinner for 20 people at the old Lenox Hotel. Each one had to get up and say something. When it came to my turn, I got up and said, “The Bible says something about a little child leading thee, but nothing about a child speaking to thee,” and I sat down. Then the senator announced that he was going to make me his first secretary or administrative assistant. I was worried, because I lost my father when I was young, and I had to work, and that's why when I worked for the Herald, which is a morning paper, I worked at night.

Then what happened was I didn't know what kind of pay I was going to get, because I knew what I was making at that time. I was making $30 dollars a week—$35 dollars a week. I got a raise when I passed the bar. [Laughter] I didn't know what it paid. My sister and myself were the two main supports at home, having lost my father, and I had a sister in college at the time and all that. Well, to make a long story short, I found out that the pay was $5,120 a year, which was more money than I ever thought I'd ever earn. In those days . . .

Q: That was big money!

FELDMAN: Big money! I never thought that kind of money existed, because I was young at the time. So I came down here that way. Then I stayed until April 1, 1930, the day the Smoot-Hawley Tariff Act passed.

A funny thing happened. I had agreed to stay in '27 through '28, after the election, then because Joe Ely, who was elected governor of the state, had promised me a judgeship in Cohasset, which is, you know, a little bit of a community. Hell's bells, at that age getting even that kind of a judgeship, it was a dream come true and all that sort of thing. I was ready to leave, but the senator said, “We've got the Smoot-Hawley Tariff Act up now, and it affects Massachusetts and New England a great deal. I'd appreciate you staying so as to analyze the schedules and so on.” So I stayed on until the day the Smoot-Hawley Tariff Act passed.

Then, through Senator Watson of Indiana, his administrative assistant was John Hayes at the time, a wonderful fellow and a good friend, too, and they got me an appointment as one of the assistant counsels to the general counsels of the Federal Trade Commission. I stayed there for only two years. It was a good experience, tried some interesting cases for them. In fact, I had several famous cases. For somebody who was a young lawyer, it was pretty good, and I did well with them.

So then I left and went out to practice and went up to Boston. I was lecturing at the law school at Boston University at the same time on trade regulation, the federal anti-trust law, and so on. In the meantime, I kept my finger in the pot. I used to work for the senator on something. I drafted the Walsh-Healy Act, which dealt with labor conventions in government contracts. Then I became general counsel to the Compliance Division of the NRA.

Q: National Recovery Act.

FELDMAN: That's right. Finally, they sent me out to try cases. I first went up to New York and Boston, out to Seattle and the whole West Coast down there and so on. Funny thing, I tried several of those cases on the law that was declared unconstitutional, and I won them. It's in the books. I won them. It's interesting.

Q: Mr. Ambassador, probably we should move to the foreign policy aspects of your career. What brought you into contact with foreign policy matters?

FELDMAN: To begin with, as you noticed in that thing that Tip [O'Neill] put in the Congressional Record . . .

Q: This was Speaker O'Neill.

FELDMAN: Speaker O'Neill. He was then Majority Leader, but that was not Speaker O'Neill I'm talking about but John McCormack. I used to come down from time to time, because I was born and brought up in John's district outside of Boston.

Q: This is John McCormack, Speaker of the House of Representatives.

FELDMAN: Yes. The period I'm talking about, however, he was Majority Leader, and Sam Rayburn was the Speaker at the time. He used to call me from time to time to come down on a Saturday, if he had to go on radio or television and so on for an interview, we'd go

over the questions and all that sort of thing. I worked on some speeches for him and things of that sort.

Well, in any event, when the two Sputniks went up, Congress got excited, of course.

Q: This is 1956-57.

FELDMAN: '57. The two Sputniks went up, one in September, I think, and another in November of '57 or something like that.

Q: These were the Soviet first satellites to go up.

FELDMAN: First satellites to go up. So we got excited. You remember Khrushchev said he was going to bury us and all that, because they were ahead of us in space and whatnot. So they decided they were really going to go ahead. Rayburn said, “Look, we'll make it a priority as far as the House is concerned, because we want to beat this, and we want to do a good job.” So he made McCormack the chairman of the committee, and it was a small committee. I think you saw the pictures.

Q: Yes. What was the name of the committee?

FELDMAN: It was the Select Committee on Astronautics and Space Exploration. He called me and asked me to come down. It was on a Saturday again. He told me about it, and I liked the idea. He said, “You will be the director of it.” Then he had Joe Martin, who was Minority Leader in the House . . .

Q: Also from Massachusetts.

FELDMAN: From Massachusetts, from Attleboro, who, when we met, said, “Well, John, why doesn't George also become general counsel in addition to being director?” Well, it didn't mean anything anyway.

I set about creating a good staff, and I didn't want to have the staff loaded with a lot of dead wood. I had a couple, but Overton Brooks saddled one on me, and Hale Boggs saddled one on me, too. But I put them in their place. One of them was a disturbing factor, and I had to more than put him in his place. We went ahead with the hearings.

Oddly enough, the only dissent that took place was right at the beginning. It was a funny experience. They sent for Allan Dulles, who was the head of the CIA at the time, and we met in that room in the Capitol, the Ways and Means room or whatever it was. Yes, it's the Ways and Means room; it's a little bit of a room. I'll never forget that Dulles had the room all tapped. I mean, everything. He had a couple of his people up there to look around and all that sort of thing. It was one of those things you read about in the movies and so on. In any event, he was the first witness to testify before the entire committee, and I was the only one who wasn't a congressman in there at the time. He read this long paper for at least an hour, and when he got through, one of the Democratic congressmen, O'Brian, asked him if he wouldn't leave it with them. This was very hush-hush and so on, and immediately the Democrats insisted, and the other insisted that they couldn't, and they started to get into a pissing conflict.

Q: We can edit. [Laughter]

FELDMAN: They started to get into one of those urinating conflicts. I let it go for about 15 minutes, and I turned to the Speaker and said, “John, I just want to tell you that there wasn't one thing that he read in that document, in that paper that hasn't already been in the newspapers.” I said, “Why don't you just say that it will be available for anybody who wants to come down and look at it, down at the CIA headquarters, and look at it?” And they did that. That's the only time we ever had dissension on the committee.

Q: What were the foreign policy ramifications of our space program?

FELDMAN: To begin with, it was a relatively new thing, as you know, and you had the question of the peaceful uses of outer space, which was what we had to work with in setting up the program, because you had the military at one end and the peaceful uses at the other end, the civilian. The UN got interested, and they set up a committee made up of delegates of different countries. In fact, the first chairman of that committee was an Italian professor, and I was appointed as their delegate. That was how I got interested.

Q: While you were looking at possible legislation and all, did the State Department give legal advice about some of the problems or not?

FELDMAN: None whatsoever, no. In fact, as far as the administration was concerned, they didn't like the idea of us setting up the kind of organization that we ultimately set up. Wilson was then the Secretary of Defense.

Q: This is Charles Wilson.

FELDMAN: Charles Wilson. He was against it. Then I noticed, for example, the other day, that the scientific advisor to the President, had died, and they had a big piece that said that he was the architect of the space program. He was opposed to it! He sent up Finan, the guy from the Budget. They came up and he said—it's in this book, by the way, not my book, the book published by the committee, in which he said, “This is what you're going to have to take,” and so on. Charlie Sheldon was with me at the time. He was the number one assistant. We had luncheon together. I looked at him. I came back and told the committee about it, and that was the last we saw of Finan. He was on the Budget Committee. But that's how they did it in those days. When the administration wanted to let you know what their position was, they sent somebody up from the budget group.

Then after that, little—what's his name?—oh, he was brilliant. We were great friends, too. He was in the White House. What was his name? You'd know it in a second, in the White House at the time under Eisenhower. After Adams left.

Q: Chief of staff?

FELDMAN: No, the Chief of Staff used to come up to see John every Saturday almost. I'll think of his name in a second.

Q: We can fill that in later on.

FELDMAN: Brice Harlow, I'm thinking of. We got along famously. We had landmark hearings and all that sort of thing. I got all the hearings here and came through with Lodge. Of course, at the UN, when we finished the sessions concerning the peaceful uses of outer space, Senator Lodge asked me to serve on the regular delegation.

Q: This is Senator Lodge, our ambassador to the United Nations.

FELDMAN: That's right. He asked me to serve on it, and I did. Then when that was about over, then Wadsworth was appointed to take Lodge's place.

Q: William Wadsworth.

FELDMAN: That's right. He asked me to stay on, but then Kennedy ran, running for the presidency, and so was Johnson.

Q: This is 1960.

FELDMAN: 1960. I was a Democrat, and I just had to turn that down, because I got very active in the campaign.

Q: How did your appointment as ambassador to Malta come about?

FELDMAN: [Laughter] In a strange way. What happened was that first, I had this other experience, too, to begin with. Right after Kennedy was elected, the Congress set up a Citizens Committee on NATO. They appointed a group to it. On the committee was

Christian Herter, the former Secretary of State and governor of Massachusetts, Will Clayton. Will Clayton was, in my opinion, one of the greatest living Americans. You know, the Marshall Plan was his concept.

Q: Yes, I know that he was a major figure in that.

FELDMAN: It was his concept. He was a wonderful man. It was one of the great experiences I've had is being able to be associated with him, and also he was one of those who went to Johnson, too. But in any event, we went over to Paris, where we had the convention, and before that, I had gone to England in connection with it, with Chris Herter and Will Clayton and Adolph Smith, who later became ambassador to Canada. His wife is a Mellon. A very fine fellow. At the convention, I made that speech there. It's up there now.

Q: I see. You're pointing to a framed speech on the wall.

FELDMAN: It was the speech that apparently made an impression on them. I remember, also, when I spoke at the convention, which were all the NATO nations, I started off by pointing out that Will Clayton was the prime author of the Marshall Plan, and everybody stood up and clapped.

In any event, then from there, I went on a number of trips that we had. As I say, I went to England. Then in order to line up some of these nations, I went to Reykjavik and Denmark and Italy and so on. They asked me to do this thing, because these people had kind of reneged, but I got them all to come to the convention. So that was a little experience in that.

I'll never forget when I got to Reykjavik, the ambassador there, he kind of ducked me. I don't know why, but he did. Estes Kefauver was a great friend of Johannes Hefstein, who was the foreign minister and something else, too. He had several offices. So everything went very well. He gave a party, the prime minister gave a party, all that sort of thing. Also, in Denmark, I had the funniest experience in the world. Talking about foreign relations and

so on, our ambassador there then, he wasn't there at the time. I mean, he was out of the country at the time. What's his name? Now he's head of the—oh, I know him so well. He's the head of the Council of American Ambassadors now [William McCormick Blair, Jr.].

Q: Yes. We can pick that up later.

FELDMAN: His number two man, what happened was that they had turned down—oh, Chris Herter, who was of Danish descent, had gone there, and they put him onto somebody that belonged to the party that had lost. As a consequence, the party that was in power, because of the fact that they were in contact and so on, or whatever the reason, they decided they weren't going to attend on the grounds that—it was a kind of thin excuse, by saying that it was expensive. Before I went, I found out—you know, I had been general counsel of A&P for many years.

Q: Atlantic and Pacific Tea Company.

FELDMAN: Yes. So the head of the Danish group that sold the company all kinds of Danish products tipped me off about what to see. He was the one who tipped me off and told me who to see there. I went to the embassy. As I say, the deputy was there, and he wanted to make an appointment for the same one that Herter had gone to see and who couldn't do anything anyway. I said, “No, I want you to make an appointment for me with the young fellow who was the head of the Labor party”. I'll think of his name in a second. No, no, he wouldn't do it. So I said to hell with him. I went and called him myself, told him who I was. He invited me over, a young guy in maybe his late '20s, but he was in his '20s. In any event, we became good friends. I also learned that the Danes love good cigars. When I went there, I had a case full of them, and I had some in my pocket. When I walked in and sat down, he was very cordial, and he opened up his drawer to give me one of his cigars. So, of course, I pulled out these. This was pre-Castro, of course. Anyway, his eyes just popped out of his head. But we got along beautifully. In fact, he invited me out for the weekend and all this sort of thing. Then what he did was arrange for me to meet with the

head of the parliament, their Folketing, as they called it. He told me that he'd just avoided the general strike the day before, and he was up all night long trying to settle the thing, and he was pretty tired. But he said, “You leave it to me.”Well, he had me go in, and we sat down for about ten minutes and talked. Then sure enough, he got them to agree. He came as the representative.

Then in Italy, I met with Grande, the foreign minister, and everything worked out beautifully. Then we had that big thing in Paris.

Q: This was the Citizens for NATO.

FELDMAN: The Citizens Commission, that's right. We did some pretty good work. Then when that ended, Kennedy appointed me one of the original—no, no, I'm ahead of myself. Even before that NATO commission, Kennedy appointed me as one of the delegates to the second Law of the Sea Conference.

Q: Yes, yes. So you were already picking up quite a bit of foreign policy experience.

FELDMAN: That's right. That's right. And incidentally, I wrote the report.

Q: All of this seems to have pointed toward an appointment towards Malta. NATO experience in Malta plays an important role, Law of the Sea.

FELDMAN: Yes. I got very interested. Then after that, Kennedy appointed me as one of the original corporate directors of COMSAT. I had written an article.

Q: Communications Satellite Corporation.

FELDMAN: I had written an article—you'll see that up there; I have copies of it if you want it—for Missiles and Rockets magazine at the time. They were just considering the idea. There was no legislation of any kind, but it seemed to me pretty obvious that we were going to have something of that kind. Remember, the AT&T had lunch there. What the hell

do they call that now? My memory's getting so terrible. Star Wars. No, it wasn't Star Wars; it was something else. In any event, the AT&T and come up with the laser. They were the ones that really got this thing started. I did some speeches and articles on things of that sort.

Then Frank Gibney, who was with me in the committee at the time, was close to one of the people at the American Library—I forget what it was called, it was the one that published Joe Kennedy's book, too. I've got the book. So we did a book on space. In the book we had a big chapter, two or three chapters on working with Russians and so on. That, too, had an international flavor. The book was published in '65, but actually it was finished at the end of '63.

Q: So this is all leading up. How did your appointment come about? I know Johnson was very secretive about his appointments, which was always a problem.

FELDMAN: I was talking about it the other day with Jack Brooks. What happened was that in '52, I was counsel both to the platform committee and to the drafting committee. That's when Stevenson ran against Eisenhower. The convention that year was in Chicago. John [McCormack] had asked me to be counsel to the platform committee and the drafting committee. I was kind of his right hand, in a way. We worked at that pretty hard and long. I worked at least 16 hours a day, at least that, one day, almost all night and all that sort of thing to get the thing in shape. The only help I had at the end, when we were drafting it and putting it in shape, was from old Senator Green, who was a grammarian.

Q: Theodore Green of Rhode Island.

FELDMAN: Yes. He was remarkable. I believe he was about 88 or something like that at the time, spry, and he was a grammarian, just what I needed. I knocked this stuff out, and he'd go over it and make it letter perfect and all that sort of thing. It was a great experience to work with him. Then in '56, that was when Kennedy wanted to be Vice President, at that time I had taken my wife and two kids, who were very, very young at the time, we got on

the Coronia to go to the North Cape countries and also wound up in Ireland and England and so on and back home. In between, Iceland and the North Cape, I got this cable to come back to be counsel to the platform committee. Of course, I didn't do it.

Then in '60, I got very active, but not in the platform committee. There I was right with John McCormack, his right hand at the time, even though Bobby was very active. I was in on the negotiations when Rayburn recommended Johnson for the Vice Presidency, and I was with John and Rayburn when they talked about it. You know, Bobby was for Scoop Jackson, but that didn't make sense, because you needed a southerner. Rayburn persuaded Johnson to take it, and John persuaded Kennedy. In fact, Kennedy needed little persuasion. When John told him that Bobby was very happy with it, he said, “But I am,” and that was it. The reason I'm mentioned it, in '64, when Senator Johnson ran, I got active in his campaign. Before it even got started, I resigned as one of the incorporated directors of COMSAT, because I was doing this. Then I said to myself, “I'm not going to go through with what I had to go through in Chicago in 1952.” So it was about five weeks before the convention, and I'd go down to the White House, and I worked on a platform. I would go down and confer with Bill Moyers a lot, so that by the time the convention started, I had something pretty well prepared, and I wouldn't have to be working 20 hours a day or anything of that sort.

In any event, the convention that year, the main convention was in Atlantic City. However, the platform committee met at the Wardman-Park. I'll never forget the day before the platform committee was to meet, we had a cocktail party at the Wardman-Park, downstairs. I'll never forget. Bill Moyers was there and I was there and Carl Albert was chairman of the committee, by the way. I'll show you the letter he wrote. President Johnson and Congressman Jack Brooks walked in, and, of course, Carl and Bill immediately were over with them. I was over with a group of people, and I kind of stayed there, watching it out of the corner of my eye a little bit. But I kept working with these different delegates. All of a sudden, I noticed that they were pointing in my direction. They'd been talking about five or six minutes or so. Also I noticed that they began walking

over to where I was. So the four of them came over, and Johnson turned to me and said, “George, Bill and Carl have told me of the yeoman work you've done. I can't tell you how much I appreciate it.” He turned to me and said, “After I'm elected, I'm going to make you an ambassador.” And he did. I'll tell you, that was a funny thing, too. They had this big party at the White House, and Marion and I were invited. Punch Sulzberger, the publisher of The New York Times, he was young then, too, and we're very great friends, we were in the line. He was right after us in the line as we came by, you know, and so on. The Marine, whoever he was, introducing us to Johnson, he made the announcement, “Ambassador and Mrs. Feldman.” [Laughter] Of course, Punch caught that. I never heard him say it before. Marion, of course, was very pleased. We had to wait a little bit before it went through. That's how it came about.

Q: What was the situation in Malta when you arrived?

FELDMAN: The British were just about to pull out. The economic situation was terrible, and the merchants were suffering. The British had literally given them the golden handshake after being in there officially since 1812 and even before then. They had the dockyards there, but there was no work or very little work, hardly any. Not much going on. A beautiful place, a lovely place, the people, almost an ideal situation. The mother was a matriarch, and they were very religious.

Q: You were saying the Maltese were suffering economically.

FELDMAN: Oh, they were really in bad shape.

Q: Why were the British pulling out after so many years?

FELDMAN: As you know, they pulled out of many places, and this was part of a policy. I think it was a mistake, but I think it began with Attlee, really, when he was elected. They pulled out of Singapore, they pulled out of a number of other places.

Q: Before you actually went to Malta, did you have any policy instructions of what you were to be trying to do when you got to Malta?

FELDMAN: I did. I had several meetings with the Secretary of State.

Q: This would have been Rusk.

FELDMAN: Rusk, the Secretary of State. Also, we arranged a meeting with the British ambassador, who was—I'll think of his name. During the course of the conversation with the British ambassador, Rusk emphasized that he wanted me to remember it was a British show, and we should go along with that.

When we talked about conditions in Malta at the time, they were pretty shabby. But that was a great challenge. Incidentally, I'm a little ahead of myself, because I remember when I came up for confirmation in the Senate, John McCormack came over and made a little presentation. I had the whole history of the thing, did my homework, in another words. I had it on cards, but I didn't need them, and it's a good thing. George Ball, who was then Under Secretary of State, commented on the fact that he'd never seen anybody as well prepared. In fact, one of the questions that Senator Pell asked me, if I'd read The Great Siege, which is the book on Malta. So we discussed that a little bit. So I had a lot of fun.

Then I got to Malta. The British governor general was Dorman. I forget his first name now, a fine man. His wife, Lady Dorman, was not so—she was all right. The prime minister wasn't there at the time; he was in England. When he came back, I'd been there about five or six days, and the foreign minister, Amato Cauci, called me and asked me to come down to meet the prime minister when he got off the plane. The whole group was going down, the ministers and whatnot. So I went down with my wife. My deputy at the time was named Jack Conroy. [Brief interruption. Tape recorder turned off]

Q: You were talking about your deputy, Jack Conroy.

FELDMAN: Yes. The foreign minister asked me to come up to the plane to meet the prime minister, George Borg Olivier, when he got off the plane, as he came down. We met, and then going back in my car, my wife started to cry. I said, “What's going on, dear?”

She said, “Mr. Conroy gave me more hell in front of all these people because I was there. He said, 'What right have you got to be here?'” So he was driving in back of me, and I stopped the car and stopped him.

I said, “Don't ever, ever do a thing like this again to my wife or anybody else I'm involved with. You won't be here any length of time at all.” I said, “You don't know how tempted I am to give you a good, sound thrashing, because I can kill you.” I had been tipped off in advance that sometimes the Department will get somebody like that as your deputy in order to make it so miserable for you that you won't stay. They did that, for example, I'm told by Doherty, when he went to Jamaica. He told me the story himself. Another one was Kennedy appointed a classmate of his to New Zealand, a classmate at Harvard to New Zealand; he lasted about four months or so. The same thing with the one that went to what is now Sri Lanka.

Q: Ceylon.

FELDMAN: Yes. So I was tipped off in advance. He ran into the wrong guy. [Laughter] And he wasn't worth the powder to blow him to hell. Here were the Maltese and here were the British, and I like the British, too, as much as he did. In fact, I'm sort of an Anglophile, in a way. In any event, I don't think he had anything to do with the Maltese at all. There was a British club there, and he'd spend his time there. He was absolutely useless.

Q: How about the rest of the staff?

FELDMAN: The rest of the staff were great. John Grimes—I don't know whether you've ever met John.

Q: No.

FELDMAN: He came to me as a vice consul. He'd been in Glasgow as a vice consul. Before that, he'd been a courier, a graduate of Notre Dame, from Alabama. He and his wife did a magnificent job with the labor group and all that sort of thing and the Mintoff group. He was brilliant. His reports were letter perfect. You know, I was supposed to be a good writer, a pretty good writer, because I've written several books and all that sort of thing. He just was great and did a great job with the people that I couldn't spend as much time as I wanted to, although I did.

Q: How did you divide up your time? I gather there were basically three elements: one, there was the British element, which was moving out; you had the Mintoff, which is the opposition group, which at least at that time had the reputation for being anti-Western; and then you had the Borg Olivier group, which was the Nationalist Party. How did you divide all this?

FELDMAN: Whenever we had parties—and we had a lot of them, because my wife loved to give parties, to begin with—we wouldn't just have one group or another; we fixed them. I had Attard Kingswell, who was head of the General Workers Union, who was married to one of Mintoff's sisters, I would have others from that group, mix them up. They were all Maltese, as far as we were concerned. And it worked.

Q: How were your relations, say, with Mintoff at that time?

FELDMAN: I made it a business to go down to Peter's Cove and swim with him.

Q: What was behind his anti-Western attitude? Was this a political move, or was this something he really felt?

FELDMAN: No, Mintoff is an enigma, in a way. He wanted to get in power, and he felt he couldn't get in through the other groups, so I guess he became extreme the other way. I

used to go to his home often. We went up swimming, and he had a little shack. I used to use that to change clothes and so on. We were very cordial. We used to walk through the woods and so on, and we would argue. I'd differ with him and all that sort of thing, but we would get along. We'd get along very well. I made it a point to. The prime minister knew that we saw each other, but Mintoff would always try to get me to find out what the prime minister was going to do. I'd say, “I don't tell him anything that we discuss, and I won't tell you anything that I discuss with him.” The only residence he ever came to was ours.

Q: Did you see an opportunity for the United States to step in as the British pulled out, in order to keep this small but very strategic nation, an island, from becoming as neutral as it has become?

FELDMAN: The best way to explain that is this. Admiral Thach, who was then the Commander of the Atlantic Fleet, in London, his deputy was a very able, very high class admiral, Arnie Schwede, I think it is. In any event, they had the Sixth Fleet in the Mediterranean, and they realized that here was Malta, with perfect deep-water harbors to take the carriers and all the groups that go with them, and if it were possible, to get them to use Malta. The British weren't too happy about that. I remember we had some sessions with them. Admiral McNitt was there when one of them tried to throw monkey wrenches into it. I remember at the end of it, they were up in Naples at the time the Sixth Fleet was, and they wanted to come down to Malta. And in the wintertime, Naples didn't compare with Malta. So I remember when they got through knocking everything, I said, “Tell me, are things better down here than they are in Naples?”

And he said, “Yes.”

I said, “Well, what the hell are we wasting our time for?”

And then what happened was this. There was the question of us selling the Maltese on the idea. So I was sent for by Arnie Schwede and Admiral Thach. I remember we met, and there was a commander—I think his name was Kennedy, too, I'm not sure. But in

any event, he gave us a briefing and all that. Would there be a possibility of getting the Sixth Fleet to be able to go into Malta on periodic visits? I knew the economic conditions in Malta, particularly with the merchants in the latter. So I said, “Now, supposing you had four visits a year. How many men would that involve?” Because you had that whole armada and whole entourage of ships coming in. He told me how many were involved, and it was considerable. I said, “Is there any way of translating that into dollars and cents as to how much they would be spending, for example, when they got in there?” He said he'd come up with a figure, which they did, and it involved about $4 million a year or more. So I said, “Let me go back and see what I can do.”

I didn't go to the prime minister directly. I went to the chief justice, the head of the supreme court, Sir Anthony Mamo. I said, “You know, I'm worried about the merchants. I'm worried about what's going on here. I want to bring some industry here.” I said, “Right now I'm trying to get Bluebell to come here, the people who make Wrangler jeans.” Funny thing. What happened was, Marion and I were at Twenty One in New York.

Q: This is a supper club.

FELDMAN: Yes. Krindler came over and brought with him the head of the company. They had a branch in Belgium, and they thought maybe they might get the Mediterranean market, the North African-Mediterranean market if they went up to a place like Malta. I sold them on the idea, in any event. I remember Wiley Ward came over. To make a long story short, they started a pilot plant with 40 machines and went up to 4,000 machines.

Q: Good heavens!

FELDMAN: It was the biggest industry there, the biggest taxpayer there. So that was one of the things that developed as they went on.

But before that, however, the Sixth Fleet thing came in. When I came back, I got a hold of Tony Mamo, and I said, “You know, I don't know if I can do this. I have no idea whether

it can be done, but I'm worried about that." I told him what I was doing in connection with bringing the Wrangler jean company to the island, and I was working on another company manufacturing books. After that, I got General Instruments to come in and change their plant from Taiwan to Malta and so on. You saw the letter in which he said I was a one-man aid.

Q: Yes.

FELDMAN: All right. This is all before then. I said to him, "I don't know if it can be done, but there's no reason in the world why it shouldn't be done. If I could bring them in, it would revive—in fact, make Valletta prosperous." I said, "Do you think it's worth a try?"

He said, "Oh, definitely. Definitely."

I said, "How do you think the prime minister's going to react?"

He said, "I'll talk with him." Well, he talked to George Borg Olivier, and he didn't have to report back, because Olivier already called me up and asked me to see what I could do.

I said, "I'll go to the headquarters of the Atlantic Fleet in London. I'll try to make an appointment with the head of the fleet. If I don't succeed there, I'm going to go to Washington and see the President."

So to make a long story short, I went back there. Thach was ready to come back with me. I said, "Oh, no, no, no. We've got to write the kind of agreement that gives us, you know, because the British aren't too happy about this. They had their cake and they ate it, and they still want it." So I said, "I'll let you know."

I came back, I saw the prime minister, and I said, "I talked with Admiral Thach and with Admiral Schwede, and they're considering it." Then I got pressure from both sides.

[Laughter] We brought them together and had a very good agreement. It didn't cost us a nickel.

Q: You left Malta just when Mintoff took over, is that right?

FELDMAN: No. What happened was that we brought the Sixth Fleet in, and everything was just perfect. It couldn't have been better. Then the other things began to fall into place. Then we got very, very close to the prime minister. In fact, when he came over here to the States, our people at Wheelus Field wanted something from Malta and we got that. We got everything that the Department wanted.

When I left Malta to go to Luxembourg, they appointed in my place a black chap who had been ambassador to Syria. What was his name? He turned out to be a disaster. He was a tap dancer, and even on the floor of the Parliament, a couple of speeches were made, one by Mintoff and some of the others, considering him a joke and all that sort of thing. Smythe, his name was. His wife wasn't with him, and he was complaining about the residence and whatnot. He said it was cold and he had to use papers to keep the wind from coming in. Actually, first I brought the Sheraton Hotel there that had a big pool there and all that sort of thing, but the biggest one was the Hilton.

Q: Oh, yes. So you were instrumental in bringing both the Sheraton and the Hilton to Malta.

FELDMAN: That had some interesting problems, too. I'll never forget Kurt Strong was the head of the Hilton at the time. What was the fellow's name from Dallas, Texas? His father-in-law owned the whatchamacallit in Los Angeles, the Biltmore in Los Angeles. He also had this big hotel in Nassau. I forget the name of that one. And the hotel in Dallas. Jordan was his name, his son-in-law. They came, and we were putting up this Hilton. They had one in Hong Kong, too, by the way. They had dug down, because it was all rock, and they had to blast. It was quite a job, but the location was beautiful. Things were going along pretty good, except one of the bureaucrats in the Ministry of Industry decided to change

the contract that we entered into, that was presented. There was no reason in the world for this. Maybe he had his hand out. So Jordan came, and he was very unhappy. He was about to say to hell with it. He dug down, it cost him money, but this kind of treatment was not right. So what I did was, I had Jordan and his wife stay with us at the residence. Then I had a luncheon for the foreign minister and this guy that was giving trouble. When lunch was over, I said, “I don't know who's doing this, but here's an agreement. Here's money that's been invested already, and now somebody in your department wants to change this agreement. I get the impression that somebody maybe wants to get paid off.” The Minister of Industry was a very able politician, by the way.

He said, “You must be wrong. Nobody in my department would do a thing like that.”

I said, “Well, I'm glad to hear you say that. But what about changing this agreement?”

“Oh,” he said, “this agreement is going to be fulfilled to the T. Every I is going to be dotted and will stand, and every T that's crossed is going to stand.” So that was the end of that. [Laughter] So I had a lot of fun.

Marion, on the other hand, she got very active and did a great job. For example, their insane asylum was a snakepit. It was terrible, awful. She went to work to get the prime minister to get somebody from England that was competent to come in and run the thing. In addition to that, she raised money to build a wing and all that sort of thing. She got very active. Also, I chartered a yacht there. I got a hell of a buy. This British woman who owned it, her parents had a couple of the big breweries in England, and she was married to a kind of ne'er-do-well, and they broke up. She had the yacht there, so she chartered it to me. I chartered it for a year. What Marion used to do is take the kids from the orphanage out. I used it on weekends at the time. That let us get on it on weekends. I remember Admiral—what was his name? He was in charge of the Sixth Fleet at the time, a wonderful guy, he used to come on board every Sunday and all that sort of thing. So we had a good time with that.

Q: Moving on to Luxembourg, how did you come to be assigned from Malta to Luxembourg?

FELDMAN: I think it was at the time when—what's her name? She had been ambassador to Luxembourg, and she wanted to get out.

Q: Was this Patricia Harris?

FELDMAN: Patricia Harris, yes.

Q: She became a cabinet secretary of HEW or something like that.

FELDMAN: So they asked me if I'd be interested, and I said I was. I had better than two years in Malta, and so we went there. However, it was very different there, because it's very prosperous.

Q: What did you see as your principal goals in Luxembourg?

FELDMAN: My principal goals were to just cement our relationship, mostly. I worked hard. You know, you can sit on your ass and do nothing, not do a hell of a lot; on the other hand, I never did that, because I never did it all my life. I had to be active. I became very close to the prime minister. And I became—oddly enough, close to the head of the Socialist Party there, he was about as anti-American as he could be. He came to a cocktail party that we had at the residence, and he was insulting. I didn't insult him back or anything of that sort, but pretty soon he came around. I'd see him once in a while. Then he got sick, and I brought over some books. From then on, he couldn't have been more pro-American than anybody there. And that was true with Gaston Thorn, who was the head of a different party. His wife was the best journalist in Malta. We became very fast friends. I can show you pictures here. They came and visited us in the south of France and all that sort of thing. When they came to this country, we saw a lot of them. We gave some parties for them in New York and all that.

Q: How was your staff in Luxembourg?

FELDMAN: I had Dick Boehm as my deputy there, and he was marvelous, absolutely marvelous. He was there for about a year, and then his wife had that dialysis thing. In fact, the State Department couldn't do much about it, but I arranged for John McCormack to get her into Peter Bent Brigham Hospital.

Q: The hospital in Boston.

FELDMAN: Yes. Naturally, he had to be with her. I had a good staff. In Malta, I had the worst administrative officer, and that was Alta Fowler. When the inspectors came, boy, they were the ones to get rid of her, and she was replaced by Wyrick, who was very good. But in Luxembourg, I had—what's her name? She became the Director General of the Foreign Service.

Q: Joan Clark?

FELDMAN: Joan Clark, yes.

Q: Yes. She became Director General of the Foreign Service and later became ambassador to Malta.

FELDMAN: To Malta. Joan was terrific. I gave her a hell of a report. Dick Boehm was marvelous. Then he was replaced by—what the hell was his name? Oh, God, he was awful. He was Josh Logan's half-brother. You know, the playwright. What the hell was his name? His wife, she wasn't American, but she was just awful. He started to raise hell with some of the other staff, who were good, very good, in fact. You couldn't ask for—particularly when Dick was there with just one. I had a secretary in Luxembourg, McCanliss, who was better than anything I ever had in private life. She was smarter than I'll ever be. Wanda McCanliss. She then went with Ambassador Beam in Poland and then went to Russia and then to Japan, and just recently retired.

Q: Mansfield.

FELDMAN: With Mansfield. She's in a class by herself. She was smarter than I. She just was great.

Q: That can make a post.

FELDMAN: Oh, she was out of this world. I really mean this. I love her.

Q: How were your relations with the Coal and Steel Community? Did you have much to do with that?

FELDMAN: I had something to do with all of them there. I'm a busybody; what are you going to do? We had the Goodyear Tire thing, the biggest employer there, and we also had the entire tire company, the one on the Belgium border. Then we had Monsanto. Had a lot of American factories there, you know, a number of them. I'll never forget when they had the fair each year, and the Russians and Hungarians and all that sort of thing had big, big displays there. All we had was a little booth. I remember going through it, and the Grand Duke came through, and the Prime Minister was there and so on, going through it, and all of a sudden, the Russian ambassador came by, and he said, in his broken way, “Mr. Ambassador, could you show me where the American exhibit is?” The Prime Minister was there, the Grand Duke, and so on, their Minister of Industry and whatnot.

I said, “I'd be delighted to. I have my car outside. If you want to follow me or come in my car, we will go to the Monsanto, and I'll show you Monsanto. We'll go to Du Pont; I'll show you the Du Pont plant. I'll show you the Goodyear plant and the other tire plant.”

Q: Firestone?

FELDMAN: No. I forget the name. Then I said, “We'll go up and I'll show you the new plant that you just put in there, the one building the large earth-moving equipment in the steel

area." So I couldn't possibly put them all together in any other place. [Laughter] Everybody laughed, and he just kind of crawled away and didn't bother me from then on.

Q: How were your relations with the Grand Duke?

FELDMAN: Couldn't be better. He gave me the highest award there after I left. That's the one that's hanging up there.

Q: Were we very much involved in the politics of Luxembourg?

FELDMAN: Werner, was very pro-American. They're good, solid people. The only thing bad about Luxembourg was for my wife. There were good things, because it was near Paris and London and Belgium, which she loved. [Laughter] But they had the most modern kind of an insane asylum. They have the most modern hospitals. They were highly, highly cultivated people.

Q: Did you have much to do with the American military there?

FELDMAN: Sometimes. Yes, I had the general out. I've got pictures in there. We had the NATO whatchamacallit there, and the armed forces came in.

Q: War College and things like this. But there were no great military . . .

FELDMAN: No, except this. Most of the speeches I made there—and most of them are in the Congressional Record, by the way—were made at the cemetery.

Q: Oh, yes, because particularly of the Battle of the Bulge.

FELDMAN: Hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of Americans, as far as you can see.

Q: Yes.

FELDMAN: The only mistake the President made when he went to Bitburg, which I had visited often, was that he didn't also go to the cemetery.

Q: We are referring to the controversial visit of President Reagan to the German cemetery at Bitburg several years ago, because there were many SS troops buried there.

FELDMAN: I visited it. I didn't see a thing wrong about the President visiting it, but I think they could have offset whatever criticism took place, which I think was unjustified. He should have visited the other cemetery, just 30 miles away.

Q: Mr. Ambassador, looking back on your time at both Malta and in Luxembourg, what would you call your greatest accomplishments that you personally look back on?

FELDMAN: Well, in Malta, the fact that we built it to a point where, for example, on the sister island of Gozo, the whole island was covered with American flags, they were very, very pro-American. That made me feel good.

Q: Of course.

FELDMAN: They were wonderful to me and my wife. I enjoyed the people there very much. There was a lot to do. I used to go to a different church every Sunday. They have 56 churches in the small country. I used to go to a different one every Sunday. Their monetary units were then pounds, but I used to put a $5 bill in, which was more money than the rest of them put in there in the till when they passed the basket. When my wife came with me, she would put $10 in. [Laughter]

Q: What did you feel was your greatest disappointment?

FELDMAN: In Malta?

Q: In either country.

FELDMAN: I can't say that I had much of a disappointment in Malta at all. I saw the thing go pro-American. I saw us bring some industry into the thing. In other words, we were making a contribution there. Then I also was impressed with the way the Navy acted when we got there. I'll never forget they had ship-to-shore exercises on the sand and so on, and the whole big beach and all that sort of thing. When they got started, there would be litter on the things because of people picking up things or they didn't do a good job of cleaning. When the Navy got through, spic and span; everything was just perfect. As a consequence, they made a great impression. And the fact that I was able to bring that industry there, even Bechtel, I got Bechtel to have them build some barges. Don't forget you have the canal that was blocked up, the Suez Canal. So the shipbuilding.

Now, the thing that bugs me, this is a very important part of this whole thing. I told you that Smythe came in there, and he was no good. Then they sent John Getz, and John did a great job.

Q: We're speaking of ambassadors to Malta.

FELDMAN: John was a career diplomat, too, by the way. He did a great job there, and I visited with him while we were there. My wife and a friend of hers, Andre Meyer's daughter, you know, the banking.

Q: Yes.

FELDMAN: Then President Nixon appointed Pritzlaff, whose wife was the Olin Matheson family. She was head of the Women's Republican Club, I think, in the west. I'm not sure exactly, but it was that kind of thing. I never met Pritzlaff, but he refused to permit anyone to see Mintoff, including himself. Naturally, he antagonized him.

Q: Oh, yes.

You were saying that you felt it was a mistake of Ambassador Pritzlaff to avoid contact with Mintoff.

FELDMAN: Both St. George, who was an assistant or the assistant to Alex Johnson when he was Under Secretary of State, and Alex Johnson thought it was a mistake, a bad mistake. I'm a little ahead of myself. During the time I was ambassador there was the fact that we had an election. Mintoff ran against George Borg Olivier. We licked 'em. I think because of my political background, I was able to be very helpful in that connection. In fact, I'm positive of that.

Q: In what manner?

FELDMAN: For example, we were able to bring some supplies and things of that sort that we gave out to people, and I got the ministers of the Nationalist Party to do that. I also worked with the moderate wing of the labor party, the General Workers Union. They spun off a little from working with Mintoff. At the same time, I didn't let Mintoff know what we were doing. Then I went over to Gozo and would work with the Nationalists.

Q: This is the other island.

FELDMAN: The other island. I worked for the Nationalist group there. And don't forget that Mintoff had been ex-communicated. I did all I could to keep that going. However, Mintoff had some influence in Rome to try to get that ex-communication order lifted, and Rome sent Archbishop O'Connor, who was then the head of the American College in Rome, came down to Valletta, and he spent a lot of time with me.

Q: Mintoff had been ex-communicated for what?

FELDMAN: From the church. He apparently was anti-church.

Q: But you were trying to keep him ex-communicated?

FELDMAN: I thought his ex-communication should not be lifted. In fact, I'm a little ahead. Another incident that took place before that, Mintoff's mother had died, and I attended the funeral in my car with the American flag flying and so on. Mintoff couldn't go to the church; he stayed away in the back there, but I went in. It was on a Sunday that she passed away. When I heard about it, I immediately drove over to Mintoff's home, where his father and brother were. I sat with them for several hours in mourning.

Then before that, I forgot to tell you of another incident that took place. One of the sailors in the fleet, a black sailor, in fact, I guess they were playing a trick on him or whatever it was. He was looking for a red-light house, and they directed him to Mintoff's father's place. When the father came out, he didn't want to let him in. So the guy beat him up. I had to go over and get that thing straightened out. I had to go over there every day for 15 minutes. I used to take Ken, who was with me at the time, Ken—he's over at the Department now. His father-in-law was ambassador to Holland at one time. I'll think of the name later.

Q: We can fill this in later.

FELDMAN: Yes. So that cemented the relationship. But the big thing was that I did what had to be done, and we won the election hands down. We won that election.

Now we come over to Pritzlaff. There's another election coming up. General Electric was going to build a gas turbine plant in Saudi Arabia. It was for the oil industry. There were going to be other plants, the oil-producing things. Getting the proper people, it was quite a job. I found out about it, and through connections, Sydney Weinberg, as a matter of fact, who is the director of General Electric, I was able to make my contacts. In fact, he had me do a couple of parties. I got them to get interested in Malta, to put the plant up there. I said, “It's tailor-made for you, because you've got skilled workers in steel at the dockyards, and they need the work badly. You could make a hell of a deal there. The labor conditions and labor costs are more than attractive.” Now, I was out of there entirely. I was no longer an ambassador. I was in New York.

By the way, while I was there, the Prime Minister's son, George Borg Olivier, wanted to go to Columbia, to get his master's degree at Columbia Law School. I paid for his tuition there. The other son, who was not too bright and so on, I even paid for his tuition up in a Catholic School in Iona, in New Rochelle, and then later one year at the university in New Jersey. So, you see, I kept my fingers in. They weren't under obligation to me, and they still listened to me.

As I say, when Pritzlaff was there, they were going to have this election. So what I did was I arranged for General Electric to send over a team to investigate what I told them. The team came back and even were more strong for having the plant built there. They thought they'd start with the pilot plant, but they even went so far as to say, “No, let's get going.” So they sent another team over. When the other team came back, same kind of report. I've got the letter saying they're ready to go, everything was settled—the wages, the place they picked, and everything else. Everything was going. I've got the papers even downstairs, many of them. Then about five weeks before or four weeks before the election, I got all this information over to Pritzlaff, with a covering report of my own, together with Xeroxes of their reports and so on. Everything's ready to go. I said, “Now, take this to the prime minister, so that the prime minister can say, 'Look what I did for the shipyards.'” Son of a bitch—pardon me, but the goddamn fool didn't do it. He held onto it and never gave it to the prime minister. And you know what happened? Mintoff won by four votes, individual votes, in one district, one parliamentary vote. He never would have won that election. He certainly wouldn't have won it if I was there. I don't say that in a bragging kind of way.

Q: No, I understand.

FELDMAN: And I never forgave him for that.

Q: I don't blame you.

FELDMAN: Then he was going to be appointed ambassador to Singapore by President Reagan, but apparently this came out.

Q: Mr. Ambassador, one final question. You apparently had a mixed set of people who worked for you, both in Luxembourg and Malta. What was your overall impression of the Foreign Service?

FELDMAN: You couldn't ask for anything more than I got when Dick Boehm was in Luxembourg. Then Marshall Nobel was diametrically opposite. He was kind of a lazy guy and all that sort of thing, and his wife wasn't helpful at all. But as I say, Dick Boehm was one of the finest persons I've ever known. We were very close. And Wanda McCanliss, she was just a dream, as I say. In private life, I never met anyone as competent as she was. She was much smarter than I was. She had good judgment, and I listened to her a lot.

Q: Mr. Ambassador, I want to thank you very, very much for this interview.

[End of interview]

Interview Number Two with Ambassador George Feldman

Date: February 19, 1988 Subject: Ambassador Feldman's career with the State Department Interviewer: Charles Stuart Kennedy

Q: Ambassador Feldman, in reviewing our tape, I found that there were several things that I had not covered. I wonder if we could go back to that.

FELDMAN: Certainly.

Q: When you arrived in Malta, you found that your support was really not how you would like it. Your administrative officer was not very efficient, and your DCM, Mr. Conroy, you

did not feel was very good. You were mentioning to me that you sometimes got help from Rome. Could you explain a little more about that, please.

FELDMAN: Before I get into that, I got the impression from Conroy that he was put there to make life as difficult for me as possible so that I wouldn't stay there very long. But that is an impression, and I got it because of the fact that I heard that the same thing had occurred to other political appointees. I also found that Conroy was completely out of touch with what the Maltese were doing and was with the British all of the time, mostly at their club that they had near where we had our embassy.

I was fortunate, however, in having had to go to Rome in connection with some sorghum that we were giving to the Maltese at their request for raising pigs and so on, which was brand-new on the island. In that connection, I met Freddy Reinhardt, our ambassador there, and his staff, and I got particularly friendly with Bob Gordon, who was one of his staff who, in turn, I found was extremely bright and extremely helpful to me on many, many occasions. I just wanted to be sure that the record showed that. Bob, at the time, was getting blind, and then later became our consul general in Florence.

Q: Yes, he was there for many years and did a very find job.

FELDMAN: He was great. He was one of the brightest men, and he was a good teacher, too.

Q: I think you are talking about something here that I think there's a misapprehension. I may be absolutely wrong. The idea that a poor DCM is sometimes put with a political ambassador to harm him, but yet, at the other side, you're saying that other people in the Foreign Service were supporting you. This may or may not be true in some cases, but generally what happens is that some of the smaller embassies, at least my impression is that sometimes you get really two types of DCMs. One is somebody who's been around for a while and they don't know what to do with them, and they put them there as just an assignment and really to get them out of the mainstream. Or two, you get a bright and

able young man or woman on their way up. This is the lot of both political and career ambassadors. However, career ambassadors usually know a little more of the system and are able sometimes to screen these people out before they arrive.

FELDMAN: I assume that. I was pretty sure of that. I might also add that I was very fortunate in having John Grimes, for example, who came to me as a vice consul, but he did much more work than that. He and his wife did a yeoman's job, a really great job there. The best proof of the fact is that the Department sent him on to Harvard and then from there he went up and up and up, and when he retired, he retired at the very top.

Q: Very good.

FELDMAN: Then the other thing is, the only reason I also said what I did say about Conroy was because I had been told by an acquaintance named Doherty, who had become ambassador to Jamaica, he told me that he had a really rough time with his deputy, and that he finally gave up. Also, President Kennedy appointed a classmate of his—I forget his name—to New Zealand.

Q: For the record, it appears that it might have been Anthony B. Akers who was appointed to New Zealand.

FELDMAN: I don't think it was him, because he only stayed there about six months, the one I'm talking about. I may be getting my facts a little mixed up here, because it happened so long ago, but that was a seed that was planted in my bonnet and being aware of it when I got to Malta and saw the way Jack Conroy behaved. I just put him in his place.

Q: Which is what you're paid to do.

FELDMAN: Yes.

Q: Mr. Ambassador, you were the first ambassador to Malta. Malta had just obtained its independence. How did you find going there as an ambassador for the first time? How were you received by the Maltese?

FELDMAN: Wonderfully. Wonderfully. It was tailor-made almost, in a way. They loved the Americans and all that, especially after we were able to get the Sixth Fleet in there. They did a magnificent job.

Q: What were the administrative arrangements for you moving into be an ambassador? Was there any ceremony changing from a consulate general to an embassy?

FELDMAN: You mean in Malta?

Q: In Malta, yes.

FELDMAN: No, I don't think there was any particular ceremony. No, everything seemed to work out very well. Don't forget that before I went, Dean Rusk, our Secretary of State, had arranged for me to meet with the British ambassador here, Patrick—I forget his name. Dean said, “You know, this is a British show, because they were there since 1812.” It worked out very well. In fact, I was as close to the British as you could be, particularly to John Martin. We spent a lot of time with each other.

Q: Could you describe the work of the diplomatic corps in Malta? What other countries were represented there?

FELDMAN: Italy and France and Israel.

Q: Were any of the Arab countries represented?

FELDMAN: Yes.

Q: Egypt or Libya?

FELDMAN: Egypt and Libya, Libya particularly. Their embassy was right near where ours was.

Q: Tunisia, I suppose.

FELDMAN: I don't think we had a Tunisian one. We may have, but several of the Arab countries, yes.

Q: What sort of role were they playing?

FELDMAN: We got along fine.

Q: These were not at that time disturbing elements.

FELDMAN: No, they were not. In fact, I was very, very friendly with the Egyptian ambassador and the Libyan ambassador. He didn't like the Israeli ambassador at all, but that was his business. I'm an American, and that was it.

Q: One final question. I noted that you said that you attended a different church in Malta every Sunday. In our previous discussion, you had mentioned that you're Jewish. I happen to be an agnostic, and yet when I was in Naples, I know that at a certain point, I could have recited the entire Roman Catholic mass in Italian because I had attended so many services. I wonder if you could explain, coming from outside the Catholic Church, how you saw the role of the American ambassador in the church.

FELDMAN: To begin with, I found that the services, to a great extent, were pretty much like the services in the synagogue. You could see that it was an offspring of the service in the synagogue. But I liked the Maltese. In fact, the fact that they were so religious made it a beautiful country. There was a calmness. The mother was a matriarch. Everybody brought home their pay, and she ran the household. They were good people. There was no such thing as crime on the island. I remember that a youngster who permitted his

girlfriend to drive his car was given a 30-day sentence or something like that. Another one who rode into Valletta without his shirt on in the summertime, he, too, was given a sentence. Things of that sort. There was no serious crime of any kind there.

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Q: She was your administrative officer at the time.

FELDMAN: Yes.

Q: Thank you.

Continuation of Interview February 19, 1988

Q: Ambassador Feldman, in reviewing our tape, I found that there were several things that I had not covered. I wonder if we could go back to that.

FELDMAN: Certainly.

Q: When you arrived in Malta, you found that your support was really not how you would like it. Your administrative officer was not very efficient, and your DCM, Mr. Conroy, you did not feel was very good. You were mentioning to me that you sometimes got help from Rome. Could you explain a little more about that, please.

FELDMAN: Before I get into that, I got the impression from Conroy that he was put there to make life as difficult for me as possible so that I wouldn't stay there very long. But that is an impression, and I got it because of the fact that I heard that the same thing had occurred to other political appointees. I also found that Conroy was completely out of touch with what the Maltese were doing and was with the British all of the time, mostly at their club that they had near where we had our embassy.

I was fortunate, however, in having had to go to Rome in connection with some sorghum that we were giving to the Maltese at their request for raising pigs and so on, which was brand-new on the island. In that connection, I met Freddy Reinhardt, our ambassador there, and his staff, and I got particularly friendly with Bob Gordon, who was one of his staff who, in turn, I found was extremely bright and extremely helpful to me on many, many occasions. I just wanted to be sure that the record showed that. Bob, at the time, was getting blind, and then later became our consul general in Florence.

Q: Yes, he was there for many years and did a very find job.

FELDMAN: He was great. He was one of the brightest men, and he was a good teacher, too.

Q: I think you are talking about something here that I think there's a misapprehension. I may be absolutely wrong. The idea that a poor DCM is sometimes put with a political ambassador to harm him, but yet, at the other side, you're saying that other people in the Foreign Service were supporting you. This may or may not be true in some cases, but generally what happens is that some of the smaller embassies, at least my impression is that sometimes you get really two types of DCMs. One is somebody who's been around for a while and they don't know what to do with them, and they put them there as just an assignment and really to get them out of the mainstream. Or two, you get a bright and able young man or woman on their way up. This is the lot of both political and career ambassadors. However, career ambassadors usually know a little more of the system and are able sometimes to screen these people out before they arrive.

FELDMAN: I assume that. I was pretty sure of that. I might also add that I was very fortunate in having John Grimes, for example, who came to me as a vice consul, but he did much more work than that. He and his wife did a yeoman's job, a really great job there. The best proof of the fact is that the Department sent him on to Harvard and then from there he went up and up and up, and when he retired, he retired at the very top.

Q: Very good.

FELDMAN: Then the other thing is, the only reason I also said what I did say about Conroy was because I had been told by an acquaintance named Doherty, who had become ambassador to Jamaica, he told me that he had a really rough time with his deputy, and that he finally gave up. Also, President Kennedy appointed a classmate of his—I forget his name—to New Zealand.

Q: For the record, it appears that it might have been Anthony B. Akers who was appointed to New Zealand.

FELDMAN: I don't think it was him, because he only stayed there about six months, the one I'm talking about. I may be getting my facts a little mixed up here, because it happened so long ago, but that was a seed that was planted in my bonnet and being aware of it when I got to Malta and saw the way Jack Conroy behaved. I just put him in his place.

Q: Which is what you're paid to do.

FELDMAN: Yes.

Q: Mr. Ambassador, you were the first ambassador to Malta. Malta had just obtained its independence. How did you find going there as an ambassador for the first time? How were you received by the Maltese?

FELDMAN: Wonderfully. Wonderfully. It was tailor-made almost, in a way. They loved the Americans and all that, especially after we were able to get the Sixth Fleet in there. They did a magnificent job.

Q: What were the administrative arrangements for you moving into be an ambassador? Was there any ceremony changing from a consulate general to an embassy?

FELDMAN: You mean in Malta?

Q: In Malta, yes.

FELDMAN: No, I don't think there was any particular ceremony. No, everything seemed to work out very well. Don't forget that before I went, Dean Rusk, our Secretary of State, had arranged for me to meet with the British ambassador here, Patrick—I forget his name. Dean said, “You know, this is a British show, because they were there since 1812.” It worked out very well. In fact, I was as close to the British as you could be, particularly to John Martin. We spent a lot of time with each other.

Q: Could you describe the work of the diplomatic corps in Malta? What other countries were represented there?

FELDMAN: Italy and France and Israel.

Q: Were any of the Arab countries represented?

FELDMAN: Yes.

Q: Egypt or Libya?

FELDMAN: Egypt and Libya, Libya particularly. Their embassy was right near where ours was.

Q: Tunisia, I suppose.

FELDMAN: I don't think we had a Tunisian one. We may have, but several of the Arab countries, yes.

Q: What sort of role were they playing?

FELDMAN: We got along fine.

Q: These were not at that time disturbing elements.

FELDMAN: No, they were not. In fact, I was very, very friendly with the Egyptian ambassador and the Libyan ambassador. He didn't like the Israeli ambassador at all, but that was his business. I'm an American, and that was it.

Q: One final question. I noted that you said that you attended a different church in Malta every Sunday. In our previous discussion, you had mentioned that you're Jewish. I happen to be an agnostic, and yet when I was in Naples, I know that at a certain point, I could have recited the entire Roman Catholic mass in Italian because I had attended so many services. I wonder if you could explain, coming from outside the Catholic Church, how you saw the role of the American ambassador in the church.

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